

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 OMB-01 SAM-01 SAJ-01 SAB-01 EB-07 AID-05

LAB-04 SIL-01 /107 W

----- 026828

R 151530Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3065

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIPOLI 0353

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT EG

SUBJECT: QADHAFI BESIEGED

SUMMARY: THE DETONATION OF THE MUHAYSHI TIMEBOMB, WITH THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ACCUSATIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN PRESS, HAS PUT QADHAFI ON THE DEFENSIVE AND UNDER MORE SERIOUS ATTACK THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE LAST AUGUST. HE IS REACTING WITH HIS USUAL DEFIANCE, ACCUSING MUHAYSHI OF BEING AND AGENT OF EGYPTIAN INTELLIGENCE AND THE CIA, AND SAYS "THE HELL WITH AMERICA", AS THOUGH HE COULD BLAME HIS TROUBLES ON THE U.S. A CASE CAN BE MADE ON POLICE GROUNDS FOR THE REGIME'S EXPLUSIONS OF THOUSANDS OF
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UNDOCUMENTED EGYPTIAN AND TUNISIAN WORKERS, BUT THE

TIMING AND THE SCOPE OF THE DEPORTATIONS SEEMS TO BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED RETALIATION FOR EGYPTIAN AND TUNISIAN HARBOURING OF THE FUGITIVE MUHAYSHI. MAJOR MUHAYSHI'S DISCUSSION OF QADHAIF'S TREATMENT OF THE OFFICER CORPS IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING. IN GENERAL, ALTHOUGH POLITICALLY AWARE LIBYANS HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR FOR YEARS WITH QADHAIF' RUTHLESS CUNNING AND DICTATORIAL METHODS, THE OVERALL IMPACT OF MUHAYSHI'S INDICTMENT OF QADHAIF' RULE MUST BE CONSIDERABLE. THE NAIVE IMAGE OF THE BAREFOOT BEDUIN WITH CHEEK IS GONE FOREVER. THE UPCOMING VISIT OF THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER WILL BRING QADHAIF BADLY NEEDED REINFORCEMENT FROM AN UNLIKELY QUARTER. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE FAILURE OF HIS ATTEMPTS TO KIDNAP MAJOR MUHAYSHI, THAT OFFICER'S ACCUSATIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN PRESS ABOUT HIS STYLE OF GOVERNING, AND EGYPTIAN PROPAGANDA BARRAGE DIRECTED AGAINST HIM, QADHAIF IS UNDER MORE SERIOUS ATTACK THAN HE HAS BEEN AT ANY TIME SINCE LAST AUGUST. HE REACTED IN TYPICAL FASHION WITH A SPEECH ON MARCH 12, IN WHICH HE THUNDERED DEFIANCE AT HIS ENEMIES, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE ACCUSED MUHAYSHI BY NAME, AND MADE THE MUDSLINGING CHARGE THAT MUHAYSHI HAD BEEN RECRUITED BY EGYPTIAN INTELLIGENCE, AT THE BIDDING OF THE CIA, AND GENERALLY SPOKE LIKE A MAN BESIEGED. "THE HELL WITH AMERICA", HE SAID AT ONE POINT, USING A COARSE STREET EXPRESSION, QADHAIF TOLD AN ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCE THAT HE HAD BEEN MUHAYSHI, MENTOR IN THE PAST, BRINGING HIM TOO THE MILITARY ACADEMY AND THEN INTO HIS REVOLUTIONARY ORGA IZAQBGN AFTER THE 1965 COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST QADHAIF, ONE OF THE LEADERS HAD TOLD HIM TO WATCH OUT FOR MUHAYSHI, BUT QADHAIF HAD NOT BELIEVED HIM. THIS WAS HOW MUHAYSHI, REPAID SUCH TRUST. QADHAIF ALSO DERIDED MUHAYSHI'S CHARGE THAT HE HAD ORDERED JALLUD'S HEAD SHAVED: "HAVE YOU EVER SEEN JALLUD WITH A BALD HEAD?" QADHAIF "REVEALED" THAT MUHAYSHI HAD MADE ABZSECRET" TRIP TO THE U.S. AND THAT HE HAD ONCE TRIED TO GET MAMOUD RIAD, SECGEN OF THE ARAB LEAGUE, TO "MEDIATE" WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER. (THE IMPLICATION OF ALL THIS, OF COURSE, IS THAT MUHAYSHI WAS ACTING AS A U.S. AGENT.) QADHAIF DENIED

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MUHAYSHI'S CHARGE THAT HE HAD FINANCED THE RECENT COUP ATTEMPT IN SUDAN. QADHAIF DID NOT REFER TO MAJOR AL-HUNI, AND SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO MAINTAIN THE THREADBARE PRETENSE THAT AL-HUNI IS STILL HIS FOREIGN MINISTER.

2. QADHAIF ALSO TRIED TO ANSWER EGYPTIAN AND TUNISIAN CHARGES OF HARRASSMEN OF THEIR WORKERS IN LIBYA, AND HERE A WORD PERHAPS NEEDS TO BE SAID IN HIS DEFENSE.

THE PROBLEM OF THE CONTROL OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN LIBYA IS ONE WHICH OCCUPIED QADHAIF'S NATIONAL CONGRESS IN JANUARY, AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT IT WAS ALSO A SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION AT A SERIES OF MEETINGS OF SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS PRESIDED OVER BY THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN FEBRUARY. THE FLOW OF WORKERS TO THE LIBYAN EL DORADO FROM THE WEST, EAST, AND EVEN THE SOUTH, FROM CHAD, NIGER, AND SUDAN, HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY UNCONTROLLED IN RECENT YEARS. AS QADHAFI SAID, WORKERS FROM EGYPT WITHOUT EVEN THE PRICE OF A BUS OR TAXI TICKET HAVE BEEN MAKING THEIR WAY ON FOOT ACROSS THE BORDER IN INCREASING NUMBERS, OBVIOUSLY AS A RESULT OF THE PARLOUS ECONMIC SITUATION IN EGYPT. ANY REGIME IN LIBYA WOULD HAVE FACED THE NECESSITY OF DOING SOMETHING TO STEM THE TIDE. THIS SAID, HOWEVER, THE TIMING AND SCOPE OF THE DEPORTATIONS WAS PROBABLY A POLITICALLY MOTIVATED RETALIATION AGAINST THE TUNISIAN AND EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENTS FOR THEIR HARBOURING OF MUHAYSHI, AND AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR THEM, USING THE WORKERS AS PAWNS. ALTHOUGH ALLEGATIONS OF LIBYAN BRUTALITY ARE PROBABLY EXAGGERATED THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE DEPORTATIONS ARE BEING CARRIED OUT - DEPORTEES ARE PILED WITH THEIR FEW BELONGINGS IN THE BACK OF TRUCKS AND DUMPED AT THE BORDER --MAKES IT INEVITABLE THAT ABUSES WILL OCCUR. IN PASSING IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT QADHAFI GAVE THE NUMBERS OF EGYPTIAN WORKERS LEGALLY HERE AS 190,000, WHILE HE HAD PREVIOUSLY TOLD THE NATIONAL CONGRESS (AND THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HAD ECHOED THIS TO US) THAT THERE WERE OVER 300,000 EGYPTIANS IN LIBYA. THE NUMBERS ARE SUSPECT, GIVEN THE STATE OF LIBYAN STATISTICS, AND THE TRUTH MAY LIE SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 OMB-01 SAM-01 SAJ-01 SAB-01 EB-07 AID-05

LAB-04 SIL-01 /107 W

----- 026755

R 151530Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3066
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TRIPOLI 0353

3. ONE ELEMENT IN MUHAYSHI'S INDICTMENT OF QADHAFI WHICH DESERVES PARTICULAR ATTENTION, AND WHICH OUR FRAGMENTARY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WAY THE LIBYAN ARMY OPERATES HAS NOT BROUGHT OUT IN THE PAST, IS HIS DISCUSSION OF QADHAFI'S METHODS WITH THE ARMY. QADHAFI IS SAID TO HAVE FORBIDDEN ANY OFFICERS TO ATTEND STAFF COLLEGES ABROAD, THUS BARRING THE WAY TO PROMOTION ON MERIT, TO HAVE REFUSED (UNDERSTANDABLY PERHAPS) TO PROMOTE OTHER OFFICERS TO HIS OWN RANK OF COLONEL, THUS CLOGGING PROMOTIONS CHANNELS, AND TO HAVE SHOWN FAVORITISM TO OFFICERS FROM HIS OWN TRIBE, THE QADHAFI. GRIEVANCES LIKE THESE ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH COUPS ARE MADE, PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF THE POLITICALLY UNSOPHISTICATED
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AND UNDEREDUCATED LIBYAN OFFICER CORPS.

4. DESPITE QADHAFI'S DEFIANT COUNTERATTACK, IT IS CLEAR THAT FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST HIS ENEMIES HAVE HIM REELING ON THE DEFENSIVE. MAJOR MUHAYSHI'S CHARGES ARE NOT NEW, IN THE MAIN, BUT TOGETHER THEY MAKE AN IMPRESSIVE INDICTMENT OF QADHAFI'S RULE WHICH IS BOUND TO HAVE AN EFFECT. POLITICALLY AWARE LIBYANS HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR FOR YEARS WITH QADHAFI'S RUTHLESS CUNNING AND HIS DICTATORIAL METHODS, BUT THIS HAD BEEN HIDDEN WITH SOME SUCCESS FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD UP UNTIL NOW, WHERE THERE ARE STILL MANY DEFENDERS OF QADHAFI'S "REVOLUTIONARY" STYLE. ONCE MUHAYSHI'S CHARGES HAVE BEEN DIGESTED, AN APOLOGY FOR QADHAFI'S REGIME WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT TO MAKE, AND HIS IMAGE IN THE WEST WILL INEVITABLY BE TARNISHED. THE IMAGE OF THE BAREFOOT BEDUIN WITH CHEEK IS GONE FOREVER, AND THIS FACT COULD IN ITSELF HAVE REPERCUSSIONS HERE.

5. QADHAFI'S REGIME IS THUS IN CONSIDERABLE DISARRAY AT THE MOMENT, AS IT HAS BEEN TO SOME EXTENT SINCE LAST AUGUST. NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO CORRECT THE SITUATION OF GROWING DOMESTIC UNPOPULARITY AND INCREASINGLY VISIBLE ONE-MAN RULE WHICH THE MUHAYSHI AFFAIR BROUGHT TO LIGHT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO TRIALS OF ARRESTED OFFICERS, AND NO NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THOSE WHO HAVE DEFECTED. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC OF FRANCE, SCHEDULED TO BEGIN MARCH 20, WILL BE OF ENORMOUS HELP TO QADHAFI IN RESTORING HIS BADLY TARNISHED REPUTATION, AND IN COUNTERING EGYPTIAN CHARGES OF POLITICAL ISOLATION. IT IS WONDERFUL TIMING FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, ALLEGATIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TRIPOL00353
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760098-0558
From: TRIPOLI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760359/aaaabztn.tel
Line Count: 238
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 MAR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QADHAFI BESIEGED SUMMARY: THE DETONATION OF THE MUHAYSHI TIMEBOMB, WITH
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, EG, LY, (QADHAFI, MUAMMAR), (MUHAYSHI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006